

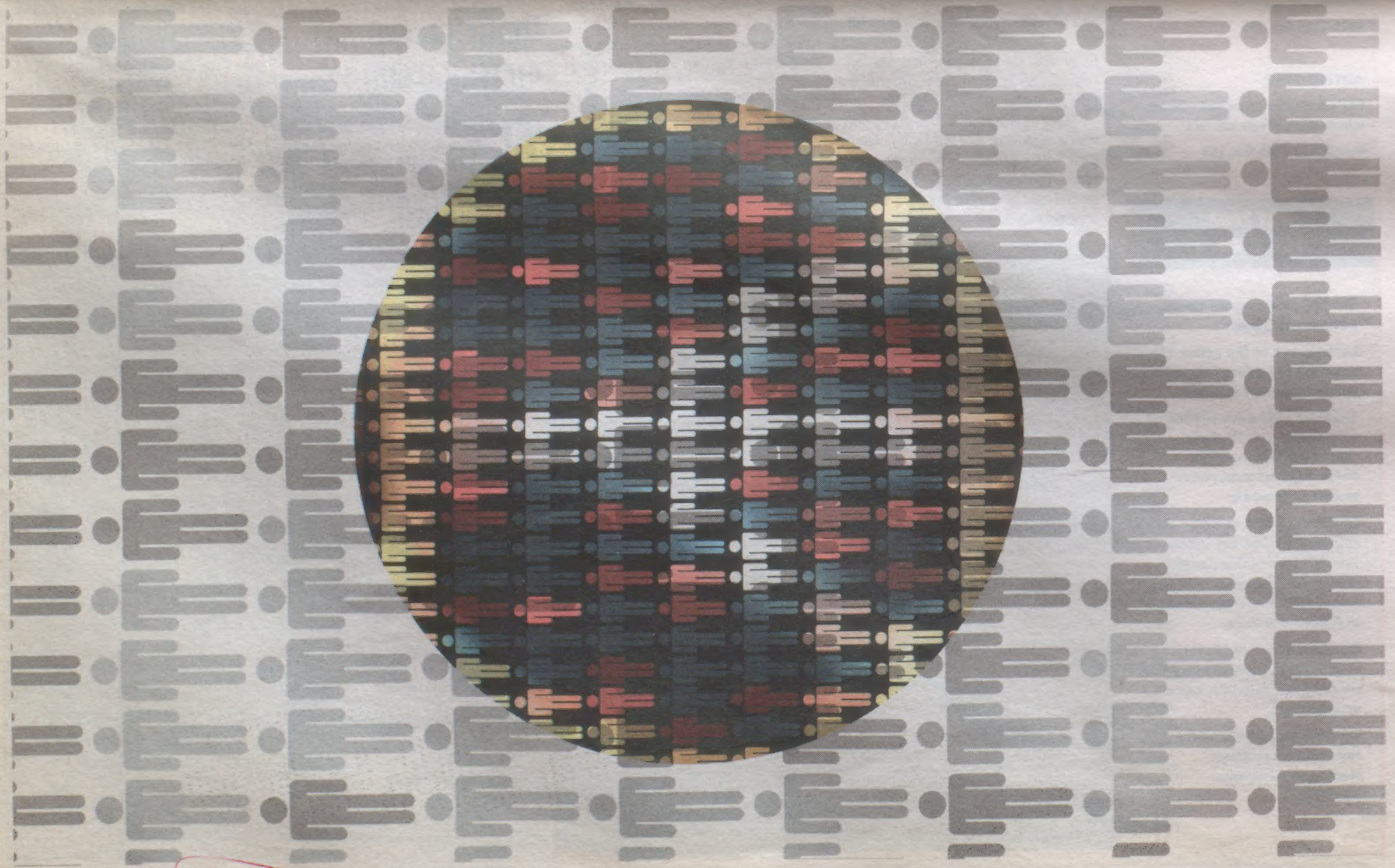
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OUR VOICE



<PUBLISHER>
Bissell Centre, Edmonton

<MANAGING EDITOR>
Warren Bjarnason

<DESIGN & PRODUCTION>
Pieter de Vos, Jr.
pdevos@bissellcentre.org

<DISTRIBUTION & MARKETING>
Ron MacLellan

<PROOFREADER>
Fred Grey

EDITORIAL OFFICES & EDMONTON DISTRIBUTION:

Bissell Centre, 10527-96 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2H6
Phone: 423-2285 Ext. 162
Fax: 429-7008
wbjarnason@bissellcentre.org

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**MAY 2003
VOL. 5 NO. 9**

Our Voice invites your contributions and input.

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Our Voice is a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA).

THE WORD

A New Culture for Iraq

The US military is certainly not at fault for all the looting going on in Baghdad, but there is plenty of evidence that they were given more than adequate warning by the UN and the British Museum that Baghdad's wealth of history was at risk. This includes the oldest known written text in existence, now missing.

Some of these artifacts were 5000 years old, and although they would be impossible to sell on an open market, few items are likely to be returned.

The most troubling thing that has come to light in the aftermath of The Battle of Baghdad is the pristine condition of the Ministry of Oil building and the security of the country's oil wells. This building is the only public structure left untouched by bombing or looting in the city, surrounded by barbed wire and heavily secured.

This is not simply a matter of oil being a priority for the Americans. What makes Iraq different from most other states subject to a military boot-kicking is that they have the resources in the form of oil revenue to rebuild their cities and infrastructures. With sanctions lifted, the Americans can feel warm and fuzzy with the knowledge that Iraqi oil capital can be used for restructuring after the initial mess is mopped-up.

More disturbing is the viewpoint which cannot or will not look to Iraq's past while planning its democratic future. The American leadership plans to rebuild Iraq in its own image, a bastion of democracy in the Middle East.



What is wrong with that? What could possibly be wrong with creating a free and democratic state? The problem is that the culture of a 7000-year-old civilization is being regarded as ugly and backward because a brutal dictator ruled the country with a bloody, iron fist for the past 35 years. Systems we still use today for our alphabet, legal codes and time-measuring were all developed in Iraq.

What is wrong with building a democracy in the Arab world? Nothing, as long as you don't passively allow the slate to be wiped blank on your way to achieving it.

Iraq could not do worse than a rule under Saddam Hussein, but its people

deserve more than to have its history lost because of pressures to set-up a new regime right away.

- Warren Bjarnason

A Foreign Policy of our own?

Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is canvassing the public to help align domestic values with foreign policy. The ninth whistlestop of a Canadian tour on April 23/03, the University of Alberta's

Convocation Hall lent itself to a strong presence of news cameras and one of the principle Canadian faces on the international scene.

These affairs often turn into a series of long diatribes, leaving little room for the discussion of issues, but the tenor of this meeting was contained around the "three pillars" of Canadian foreign policy: Security, Prosperity, and Values & Culture. This allowed some sense to be made of the proceedings without quieting disagreeable voices.

Graham discussed our umbilical relationship with the US at length, explaining that our trade with the US has expanded from 25-40% of GDP since 1993. NAFTA has seen a higher economic integration with both Mexico and the US that will only continue to increase.

Speaking of the Canadian position to abstain from war in Iraq, Graham asserts: "We say yes or no depending on our own policies; our multiculturalism is changing our domestic values to reflect our society and this must be reflected in our foreign policy."

Graham was almost disturbingly optimistic regarding any potential backlash from the Americans, citing only increasing problems at the border due to the "new stringency."

Graham stressed the paramountcy of bridge-building and the need for global systems like the UN, the Kyoto Accord and an International Court with real authority to deal with global issues on a global scale. One normally leaves meetings on government policy with a numbing sense of doom, but Bill Graham possesses an optimistic beaming which makes you feel comforted that he is the face of Canada to the rest of the world.

- Warren Bjarnason

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Book of Days:

May 9

The psychologist and philosopher William James to his son, William James, Junior, and brother, the writer Henry James, after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The recipients were in England.

All the anguish was yours; and in general this experience only rubs in what I have always known, that in battles, sieges and other great calamities, the pathos and agony is in general solely felt by those at a distance; and although physical pain is suffered most by its immediate victims, those at the scene of action have no sentimental suffering whatever. Everyone at San Francisco seemed in a good hearty frame of mind; there was work for every moment of the day and a kind of uplift in the sense of a 'common lot' that took away the sense of loneliness that (I imagine) gives the sharpest edge to the more usual kind of misfortune that may befall a man. But it was a queer sight, on our journey through the city on the 26th (eight days after the disaster), to see the inmates of the houses of the quarter

left standing, all cooking their dinners at little brick camp-fires in the middle of the streets, the chimneys being condemned. If such a disaster had to happen, somehow it couldn't have chosen a better place than San Francisco (where everyone knew about camping, and was familiar with the creation of civilizations out of the bare ground), and at five-thirty in the morning, when few fires were lighted and everyone, after a good sleep, was in bed. Later, there would have been great loss of life in the streets, and the more numerous foci of conflagration would have burned the city in one day instead of four, and made things vastly worse.

May 14

Conrad Russell to his sister Flora, 1918.

But I'm not sorry for people who are killed. It must be better to be dead than alive in a world like the present one. I am sure of it but I don't go about saying so. And I don't mind either my own body rotting above ground. But I'm

sorry for those who have to live for days in its immediate company.

There's no doubt that there is deep resentment among the troops at the attitude of the press and the old men. Lloyd George brought back the message from the Army: 'We are all right. Don't worry.' What does he know after motoring to Abbéville and back and seeing Sir Douglas Haig? Men are naturally reticent and wish to spare others. They no more talk openly about it than do doctors about cancer and childbirth. Even in my extremely limited experiences there were many things I think of every day but never wish to speak of. I had great difficulty in learning what my old squad had actually done when I got back here. The officers didn't wish to speak about it. Many of those who have killed a German have it on their minds and it haunts them. But even clever men like Mr. Balfour and Lord Curzon have no imagination, it seems. The next time they kill a pig at Whittingham [Arthur Balfour's house in Scotland] let Mr. Balfour take it on single-handed with a bayonet. Then he may get a glimmer of what the 'joy of battle' means.

May 30

The execution of Joan of Arc, from the official contemporary account, 1431.

After the sentence was read, the bishop, the Inquisitor, and many of the judges went away, leaving Jeanne upon the scaffold.

Then the Bailli of Rouen, an Englishman, who was there, without any legal formality and without reading any sentence against her, ordered that she should be taken to the place where she was to be burned.

When Jeanne heard this order given, she began to weep and lament in such a way that all the people present were themselves moved to tears.

The said Bailli immediately ordered that the fire should be lighted, which was done.

And she was there burned and martyred tragically, an act of unparalleled cruelty.

And many, both noble and peasant, murmured greatly against the English.

WORD W

WORD: Faculty of speech; locution, talk, parlance, verbal intercourse, prolation [archaic], oral communication, word of mouth, parole, palaver, prattle.

ROGET'S THESAURUS

THE WORD

AIDS on the back burner

Live from Toronto, simulcast at Grant MacEwan College on April 15/03, Stephen Lewis began his address to the audience with some entirely necessary levity.

A naturally charming and ingenuous man, Lewis was right to ease his audience into a discussion on HIV/AIDS in Africa slowly.

Former UN Ambassador to Canada being only one of the notches on Lewis's resume, his efforts are now directed toward raising much-needed funding to help the AIDS pandemic in Africa. On his team of supporters are note-worthies such as Kofi Annan, Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela. Even with this depth of heavyweight clout backing the efforts of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, funding from governments around the world have been measly at best.

Raising awareness of the severity of the problem does not seem to be the difficulty. The challenge lies in convincing governments that many lives can be saved by providing funds for cheap, readily-available antiviral drugs.

If supporters such as Annan, Clinton and Mandela cannot convince governments around the world that they need to take a greater role in fighting an out-of-control situation, who can?

Kofi Annan has suggested a Global Compact for present and prospective members of the UN. This compact would contain certain requirements for corporate responsibility and being or becoming a "good global citizen," receiving a good working relationship with all UN bodies in return.

If there remains anyone in the world who holds the view that AIDS is only contracted by high-risk individuals who have cast their

own fate, the facts and figures refute these misconceptions once and for all. Sixty-eight percent of those infected are adolescent or young adults, fifty-eight percent are women and an expected twenty-five million children are forecasted to be orphaned by 2020.

How can we expect African countries to sustain stable societies when children have to raise themselves? This is not a remote problem that affects countries only at their source. This pandemic is destabilizing an entire continent and that throws the world economy off balance.

The global community has seen the need and given appropriately on an individual basis and some corporate donations have beat-out those of some governments. In Nigeria in 2001, Annan said he needed a minimum of \$7-10 billion per year to fight AIDS. Through a global fund, he received \$2.4 billion for a four-year period. Governments of the world are dropping the ball, they are doing much less than any other sector to help.

If we can no longer look to governments for leadership on issues critical to global well-being, where are we meant to find voices of social guidance?

Lewis posits that such leadership guidance is increasingly felt from the community sector, largely because they are the voices left unsullied by questions of loyalty and compassionate intent.

The anti-privatization movements in South Africa are a good example of how community movements are a formidable voice capable of exacting real, meaningful changes, and equally, preventing harmful changes.

"Similar community movements are powerful all around the world," says Lewis, "This speaks to the need for the broad body politic to embrace the standards and actions of the community sector."

-Warren Bjamason

Compassion, sympathy. The affections were at one time supposed to be the outcome of certain secretions or organs, as the bile, the kidneys, the heart, the head, the liver, the bowels, the spleen, and so on. Hence such words and phrases as melancholy (black bile); the Psalmist says that his reins, or kidneys, instructed him (Psa. x. 7), meaning his inward conviction; the head is the seat of understanding; the heart of affection and memory (hence "learning by heart"), the bowels of mercy, the spleen of passion or anger, etc.

His bowels yearned over him (upon or towards him). He felt a secret affection for him.

"Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother."

Gen. x liii. 30; see also 1 Kings iii. 26.

V VERDICT

Decision, determination, finding, **verdict**, sentence, decree; opinion (belief); good judgment (wisdom)

ROGET'S THESAURUS



THE VERDICT

On Film

As a kid, I remember overhearing a program on the Third Reich and assuming Der Führer was German for The Infuriated; I was also perplexed by "the abolition of all Polish jewelry" (actually Jewry), although later noticing Mrs. Gorchanski's earrings, I could sort of see their point. We were all kids once, with our secret webs of logic and fantastical conjectures. So was Hitler -- a kid, an adolescent, an unschooled soul, scanning destiny as question marks burned holes on his raw, young heart. The fictional movie Max is a portrait of Adolf Hitler (Noah Taylor), the failed artist as a young man and Max Rothman (John Cusack), a Jewish art dealer whom he deigns to open his rumples portfolio. Unbeknownst to Hitler, the trajectory of his dream is already arcing; unbeknownst to Max, this man will kill his children.

The film opens in an enormous, leaky warehouse, where Max is surveying the treasures that reverently repose there: huge "modern" expressionistic paintings (remarkably solid and arresting for movie props). He's setting up for a showing and hopes to ply impressionable rich people with enough hype and champagne so that they will happily throw money at him. Art dealership is such a sublime gamble and pitch. The

object's value is completely in the eye of the moneyed beholder, who may loathe the Zeitgeist, punch its nose and send it careening in another direction. And what rough trend, its hour finally come, slouches toward Bohemia to be born? Who can crunch these unfathomable numbers? Though endlessly affable, John Cusack is not convincing as an inflamed art lover or diviner. His enthusiastic effusions sound tinny, self-conscious -- "dealer, heal thyself". He's in abstracted love with his beautiful wife Nina (Molly Parker), who acknowledges his infidelity with confusing and unrealistic aplomb -- but then, she is a ballerina and they do everything with aplomb. I think Molly Parker and Benicio del Toro should start a company renting out their sex appeal; they both have ridiculously more than is practically warranted. Max's mistress Liselore (Leelee Sobieski) is an artist; this may be a narrative device to help him look more, um, art-loving. When they're together in her home, they seem to inhabit a painting; still, I found this a superfluous, almost tiresome plot point.

Max is fond of women, wine, food, cigarettes and strong coffee. These attachments are viewed with near spitting derision by Hitler, whose molten madness is sniffing out a foundation on which to solidify. Noah Taylor is excellent as the tetchy, humorless, smoldering weirdo whom Max amiably

pities and encourages (though sometimes his accent devolves into a European swamp water of no fixed homeland). Max also wants to understand him, but it's soon apparent these eccentric waters don't run deep; they're murky, fetid and stagnant with self-obsession. "Go deeper," Max admonishes "Channel your passion, work harder"; but Hitler, whose insanity is still at a low boil, seems to look through him, his galvanized ego filtering out anything but praise. The portrait is taking shape.

A mental plague sickens the spirit of so many soldiers back from the war. They are rootless, in ill health and a many-leveled hunger besieges their hope. Germany is in disgrace, the Treaty of Versailles gift wrapping that fact for them, and the collective anger and disillusion is seeking a target. When Hitler is approached about working in propaganda, his gaze seems to steady; it's as if his cacophonous inner voices respond to this calling from the real world. He has a growing obsession with races keeping their "purity of blood" and the imagined superiority that engenders. He admires the Jews, the strength of their identity, their perceived strategic exclusion; it's a recipe for dominance and he wants Germans to take heed.

His dream of being a great artist is hemorrhaging; in a dank, little cabin (you expect Ted Kaczynski to walk in at any time) we watch him mix paint on a palette so

manically that he turns it all to black. He's misread the crazed siren song to greatness and has the madness, but no method. But he can vent all these frustrations through his part-time oration job; all his dynamism, his anger, his fantasies explode cathartically out of him. He fans already glowing embers of anti-Semitism; there's only so much room on a life raft and people are growing mean. Still, there was one small hope; in a development of almost overbearing irony, Max is so impressed with Hitler's sketches of a fantastical German super race, he might give him a show. But events tailspin through choices and incident and the rest, as they say, is history.

This is an interesting concept for a story: Would one of history's greatest monsters have been deterred if he'd been given another spotlight? If he'd been talented, would he have been satisfied with fame and just quietly destroyed the lives of those close to him, like Picasso? Would someone else have stepped up to the "mike" if Hitler had been hit by a bus?

This is an engaging movie though not brilliantly realized; some of the cinematic devices seem ham-fisted and the script often lacks subtlety, but Noah Taylor's performance makes up for a lot. I give it drei out of fünf.

- Keyna Laurence

THE VERDICT



VERDICT **V**

Those who invoke history will certainly be heard by history. And they will have to accept its **verdict**.

DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

On Theatre

Early in March I was privileged to attend a dress rehearsal of *The Vagina Monologues*. Vagina Monologues is a performance of prose poetry by Eve Ensler designed to celebrate female sexuality and raise consciousness of the consequences of the violence, subtle and overt, perpetrated on women of all ages and cultures. Edmonton's performance, at the Provincial Museum on March 8th, International Women's Day was one of three hundred held in venues ranging from plush amphitheatres to jungle huts around the world. Proceeds from the Edmonton performance were directed towards the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.

I say I was privileged to attend because with a ticket price of \$37.50 attending this performance would have been beyond my budget if a friend in the cast had not invited me to the dress rehearsal. I felt a little embarrassed at first by the jokes about the mechanical difficulties of inspecting one's own vagina, the contortions before a mirror, the placement of lights. Soon, however, I became completely enthralled by these enactments of interviews with 200 women. I was amazed to discover that the anxieties and insecurities about my own body, which I have endured in solitude for so many years, are part of a common body of feminine experience shared with many others.

I laughed so hard at the tale of the sex worker who left her successful law practice to find her bliss-producing groans of sexual pleasure from her female clients. The young actresses's enactment of expression of orgasmic delight by many different women left me holding my hurting stomach.

I thrilled with the woman who wrapped a scarf around her hips and declared, "My short skirt is not an invitation to rape," and joined the rest of the room in a roar of approval as she ended her piece with the ringing declaration: "My short skirt, and everything under it is MINE!"

When two actresses spoke of the experiences and attitudes of five women in Bosnia before and after being held sexual hostage by soldiers in that country tears rolled down my cheeks unheeded. I'll never forget the chill in my entire body when one girl said, "I don't go there anymore, not since that soldier stuck his rifle barrel in there and I waited to find out if he would pull the trigger."

Over the course of the program I became acutely aware of how my own life has been diminished, my potential in so many realms beyond the sexual truncated by encounters with men who do not even realize how their unexamined attitudes and expectations injure women. As I walked down the driveway toward the bus stop after the performance, a young man who had also attended somewhat plaintively told me, "I didn't get some of the things you were laughing about."

I just shook my head as I walked away: "That's the problem, you guys just don't get it."

I wish this performance could have been held at The Women's Shelter before women whose lives have been devastated, at least in part, by their encounters with men, fathers, brothers, husbands, employers, co-workers, lovers. I would have liked more women to realize they are not alone with their injuries.

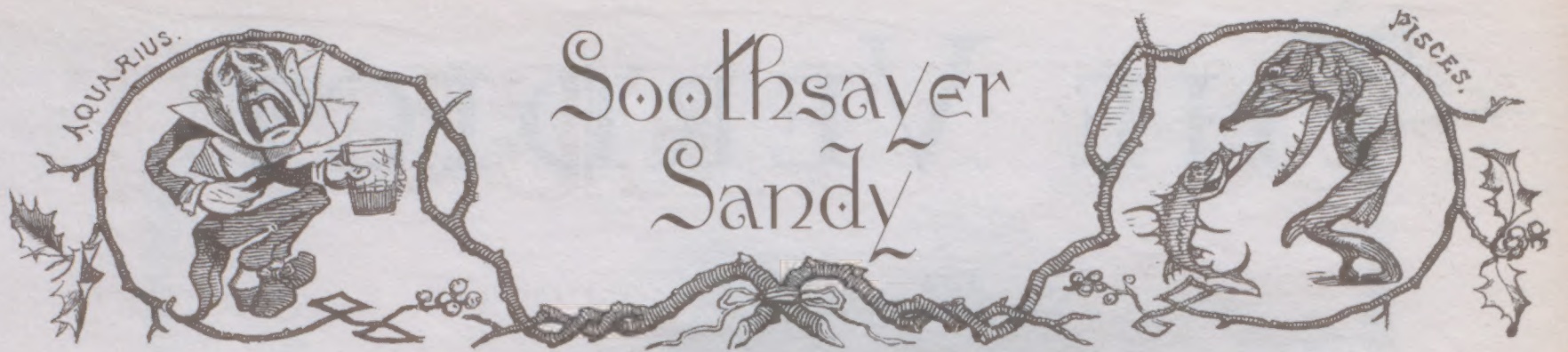
The closure of this experience for me occurred a week later at a gathering of some of the old school chums in a pub on Whyte. We all congratulated Norma on her performance and then several of us women embarrassed our old male classmates with a discussion of our experiments in the practice of shaving pubic hair. All the women in porn videos do it so men are beginning to ask their sexual partners to do it. We all agreed that this is not something any woman in her right mind would want to do twice. We agreed with the conclusion of the play: If men want pussy, they are just going to have to learn to like hair. To conclude on an uplifting note, if any ladies out there are worried that things are getting a little thin down south, I am happy to report my bush is growing back thicker and curlier than ever after its recent trim. There is hope for renewal in the world yet. I'm looking forward to the performance of this play again next year.

- Theresa McBryan

V Day is not just about comparing scars. It is a movement to stop violence against women and girls. The ends of this process, printed in the brochure of the project, are that:

When the Violence Stops, Women and Girls will be:

- Allowed to be born in China, India & Korea
- Swimming in Iran
- Safe in their beds in the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia
- Eating ice cream in Afghanistan
- Keeping their clitorises in Africa and Asia
- Wearing blue jeans in Italy
- Voting in Kuwait
- Walking in the park at night in the US
- Openly flirting in Jordan
- Safe at parties on college campuses
- Playing with toys and not being sold as them in Asia, the United States, Europe
- Driving cars in Saudi Arabia
- Wearing trousers in Swaziland
- Safely walking home from work in Juarez Mexico
- Enjoying sex
- Celebrating their desires
- Loving their bodies
- Running the world



S SOOTHSAYER

Soothsayer. Beware the Ides of March. Caesar. He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

AQUARIUS (JANUARY 20TH - FEBRUARY 18TH)
Though you lament the recent departure of Peter Garrett from Midnight Oil, take heart, for there is still a lot of good music to be made in this passing realm. Your own creativity, though sometimes capricious, has the potential to make you an agent of this continuing musical celebration. Be warned, however, for it is not unprecedented for people of your sign to develop sudden and mysterious allergies to metal mouthpieces. Choose your instrument carefully.

PISCES (FEBRUARY 19TH - MARCH 20TH)
May is a month of overdue recognition. Your latent fame will surely blossom if you consent to the revelation of your comprehensive system of mnemonics. People throughout the English-speaking world - though they might not realize it - are yearning for easier and more practical techniques to remember the important minutiae of electronics, music and auto mechanics. Unveil your genius! Beware that your newfound fame does not cloud your judgment in establishing your rank of associates, particularly those of a more intimate nature. You might find yourself in a relationship that is beginning to consume itself. Advise against buying a snake as a pet, especially if the sum of your ages is 69. Though many famous people have issues of paranoia surrounding food and being poisoned, stuffing your own sausages is not recommended.



ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 19)
Your mind is like a steel trap which desires the creamy lubricant of human kindness. You should stay away from adopting new pets until your crescent moon sets under your ascending impenetrable fog. Children love you, but they will be terribly rude until your karma aligns with the rest of your body.



TAURUS (APRIL 20TH - MAY 20TH)
Indecision and doubt needn't be regarded as obstacles to living a full and rewarding life. While a realistic sense of perspective is in order to mitigate the paralyzing effects of your perfectionism, you may still embark on a personal campaign to embrace impulsive behaviour and nurture the emancipating intoxicant of spontaneity.



GEMINI (MAY 21ST - JUNE 20TH)
Saturn is in optimal astral alignment this month for harmonic convergence. This creates a bilateral field attraction which could draw you and your partner into a closer orbit. Don't be too surprised if a ring makes an appearance this month. (N.B. To appear like you really weren't expecting it is to risk the misinterpretation that you are settling with your current partner because you never thought you would be forced into the awkward situation of having to reject a proposal.)



CANCER (JUNE 21ST - JULY 22ND)
When your natural bent towards sentimentality is coupled with your bi-annual spasm of philanthropy, as it is around the 17th of this month, you become susceptible to making imprudent financial decisions. If, over the holiday weekend, a wealthy childhood acquaintance comes to you with a chance to pitch in with \$5,000 and help convert the old drive-in to a research institute dedicated to the eradication of hemorrhoids, simply wait 48 hours until Uranus moves out of the House of Pain.



LEO (JULY 23RD - AUGUST 22ND)
By placing credence in the doctrine of predestination, you undermine the simple willpower required to lose weight. Wallpapering your bedroom with advertising slogans isn't going to cut it. Be the wily cat you know yourself to be and exploit your cosmic advantage presented by Leo's dalliance with the twins; though maybe it hasn't hit you yet, it's not bad timing because for five days in May you'll be head over heels for your bodacious dark angel and when you gain control again you'll discover that the conditions are ideal for initiating your rodeo weight-loss plan. Just make it to the bell.



VIRGO (AUGUST 23RD - SEPTEMBER 22ND)
Be circumspect in all your dealings during the waxing and the waning. Caution, however, can be thrown to the feral wind sprites during the full and new moons. (N.B. There's no accounting for a blue moon; all bets are off.) In particular, your affairs in the job, travel, personal hygiene and household cleaning spheres must be given careful consideration because you could be flirting with unemployment, cavity searches and 2nd degree chemical burns. Don't let your prepossession to see things as you'd prefer them to be instead of how they actually are lead you into financial, emotional, and/or physical discomfort.



LIBRA (SEPTEMBER 23RD - OCTOBER 22ND)
Regular, habitual substance abuse will lead to corruption and dissipation, perhaps even disaster. You might think that it opens the door to an otherwise inaccessible body of insight, or you might feel comforted in its warm but temporary embrace or you might simply be unable to quit. Whatever your reason, know this: You are worse off for having consorted with that greasy monkey, and as long as it is on your back, it will only force you further down. Regardless of how the heavenly array is configured, as long as you remain on this earthly plane and under the thrall of your monkey, you will not be free of its choking oppression. The good news is that during the ascension of Venus, the conditions will be ripe for you to undertake a Phoenix-like rising from the burning embers of your addiction.



SCORPIO (OCTOBER 23RD - NOVEMBER 21ST)
Your lifestyle pace is quickening to the point where it will soon be beyond your control. This is not due to the accelerating influence of dark mat-

ter in the universe but rather to your own carelessness in allowing your natural tendency towards restraint to be overrun by your competing need for stimulation. Tear up that membership application for the tool-of-the-month club and clear a full third of the social engagements from your calendar for the next two months. Most of your work responsibilities cannot be avoided without jeopardizing your employment status and the loss of financing for your lifestyle could prove to be an insurmountable obstacle. Discipline and mental focus are the key resources that you must bring into play if you wish to carry through with your planned dream vacation seal-hunting in Pangnirtung next winter.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22ND - DECEMBER 21ST)
There comes a time once every earthly trip around the sun when your sign permits consequence-free exercise of your whims; sort of a planetary plenary indulgence if you will... and this is your lucky month. Of course, this comes with a caveat: The "free pass" does not extend to any illegal or immoral activities. So knock back those éclairs and pops and get set up in front of the playoff game with your bowl of microwave popcorn in your favorite chair. Just preserve inviolate the Ten Commandments and remember, you can't score if you don't shoot.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22ND - JANUARY 19TH)
Vulgarity is one habit that your proper rearing and diligence have kept at bay. The positions of Mars and Pluto this month will exert a deleterious undertow on your grace and dignity. Should you choose to yield to this passing influence, you will be faced with many months of toil in rebuilding your social capital. The temptation will be strong but remember that you are highly regarded within your circle.

SCUTTLEBUTT



Compassion & Empathy

In the first step toward a compassionate heart, we must develop our empathy or closeness to others. We must also recognize the gravity of their misery. The closer we are to a person, the more unbearable we find that person's suffering. The closeness I speak of is not a physical proximity, nor need be an emotional one. It is a feeling of responsibility, of concern for a person. In order to develop such closeness, we must reflect upon the virtues of cherishing the well-being of others. We must come to see how this brings one an inner happiness and peace of mind. We must come to recognize how others respect and like us as a result of such an attitude toward them. We must contemplate the shortcomings of self-centredness, seeing how it causes us to act in unvirtuous ways and how our own present fortune takes advantage of those less fortunate.

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

SCUTTLEBUTT **S**

SCUTTLEBUTT: Idle, often sensational and groundless talk about others: gossip, gossipry, hearsay, report, rumor, talebearing, tattle, tittle-tattle, word.

ROGET'S THESAURUS

Canadian Cavorting American Brutality

The war is over and the United States of America has won. The U. S. is continuing on its course in the world despite a majority of voices for peace. Peace has not been achieved despite the warring as chaos reigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. And controversy over Canada/US relations, our support or lack of it for a United States position, generated by the current conflict, continues.

This difference of viewpoint, how Canadian or American citizens see their country's place in the world is not new. The viewpoint arises in large part due to how citizens conceive of the purpose of their respective governments and the reasons for the existence of a sovereign state. While the United States' position of Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness (LLPH) is well-known throughout the world, Canada's standard of Peace, Order and Good Government (POGG) is less so. The difference between these fundamental ideas for statehood promotes conflicting ideologies and consequent vigorous debate whenever international relations are considered.

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness could be the title of a primer for the average 23-year-old. I think of images of free-spirited, potent beings carelessly cavorting in mountain meadows. This is a nice fantasy for individuals, but as a standard of statehood it is lacking.

To take into consideration another's Life,

Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness as equal with your own, conflicts on many levels with your own LLPH. A person's preoccupation with their own LLPH interferes with the ability to conceive of someone else's suffering. One's own Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness takes precedence over another's.

There are also unwritten values transmitted with this ideology -- those of competitiveness and arrogance -- induced by the incessant clamor for LLPH. Attendant are the embedded extremes of the meteoric rise

Canadians could do with more cavorting

of the hero and of morally abhorrent actions that wend their way from fringe to mainstream, as evidenced by the United States' domestic policy. The USA is the only country in the world that now executes its juvenile offenders, its citizens who have committed crimes when they were under eighteen years old. They have, so far, executed three of their young people. [Amnesty International, September 11th, 2003, www.amnestyusa.org and www.deathpenaltyinfo.org]

While Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness may be easily subsumed under Peace, Order and Good Government, the reverse does not as easily apply. Peace, Order and Good Government allows as a secondary, personal value, Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. It naturally follows. But LLPH permits POGG only with considerable difficulty. Consider the high incarceration and execution rates in the USA. These rates are among the highest in the world; the USA is one of the few countries in the world to increase its execution

rate for its citizens in 2002. [Ibid.] These are the extraordinary means necessary for the U. S. to enforce Peace and Order throughout the country under the destabilizing shadow of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Peace and Order do not naturally follow. But is this Good Government? Moreover, does this engage a rational foreign policy?

The images invoked by POGG are rather of a stodgy sort. Canada appears as a comfortable place, but does anything ever happen here? There are unwritten values of equality and compassion, but also stagnation, an unhealthy conformity, as the desire for stability blinds innovation. Witness the difficulties in making needed changes to government. It is much more difficult to do so in Canada than in the U. S.. The embedded extremes are a wisdom that can see and act upon a larger whole, but produce a dictatorship that lacks vision. Some Canadians have said that our Prime Minister acts as a dictator on occasion.

The Office of the Prime Minister does possess dictatorial powers when push comes to shove in the Canadian political power game. Many members of parliament are demanding changes to the Office of the Prime Minister and to the system of voting for Bills in parliament that allow for more free votes, for more democracy. The reasoning, of course, is that the worst governments are run by dictators such as Saddam. The caveat being that any change may be worse than what we have in Canada right now; that a somewhat constrained Prime Minister, a dictator of sorts, is okay.

When both viewpoints are considered together, the United States psyche imbued with Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness needs to get off the ranch and embrace a larger vision, drop its arrogance and reposition Peace, Order and Good Government as a primary value. Canadians could do with more cavorting, but perhaps that is just my personal view.

Applied internationally, Life, Liberty and

the Pursuit of Happiness becomes the striving to ensure that one's own international persona or government is at the very top of the heap, and that leads to endless conflicts. Peace can only be achieved in this model through a struggle for dominance, war for peace, the current United States' position.

Peace, Order and Good Government applies differently on the international level. If we think first of peace, we don't threaten and retaliate like some schoolyard bully with a big stick when we don't get our way. We talk and we talk and we talk some more. Peace becomes the means and the end.

Saddam is gone from power due to U.S. warring. Is there now peace for the people of Iraq? Is Afghanistan a haven for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness? Has war achieved its goal? 'No,' 'no,' and 'yes' or 'no,' depending on to whom you talk. Many deaths occurred for such little result. So many died because a few old men wanted their own immortalized Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness at the expense of Peace, Order and Good Government. From the arrogance and the moral corruption of the pinnacle of American power they crave satisfaction for their collective 911 bloodlust, and have whipped their country into a frenzy as a means to that end. These are low motives for killing, even as collateral damage, as if any motive gives justification for killing children.

The war is illegitimate, being the product of the United States' self-centred considerations and a morally perverse international policy. They say they bring Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness to the peoples of the world, but this is only an excuse for domination and slaughter. Canada's position on the war in Iraq has been morally and legally correct.

- James Lauder

SCUTTLEBUTT

D SCUTTLEBUTT

A drinking fountain on a ship; A cask on a ship used to hold the day's supply of drinking water.

THE AMERICAN
HERITAGE DICTIONARY



Changing the Lockes

Another older apartment has been closed down adding to the shortage of affordable housing for people on low, fixed incomes. The Locke Apartment at 11202-94 Street was evacuated at 3:00 p.m. March 28 when the apartment was condemned by a city safety codes officer.

"In closing the Locke we have lost one of the few places providing housing for the hard-to-house," said Victor Botori of the Boyle Street Co-op. With the low vacancy rates and landlords able to choose tenants, he said there is an ever-increasing need for more tolerant housing that will support people who have high needs.

Mary is one of the newly homeless. She and her husband, Daryl, were forced to vacate Room 17 at the Locke, a room they had called home for a year and a half. "Bang, our door was kicked in. A bald-headed cop was standing there. He gave us five minutes to leave," Mary said, then described how the door canted in as the top hinges gave way. "Daryl needed his I.D. We had just bought \$50 worth of food. We couldn't get that out, but a cop brought Daryl his leather jacket."

Mary said they stood outside the Locke for about six hours, then the Red Cross put them up at the Mount Royal Hotel for three days.

"We had no food. We were starving. They said to go to The Mustard Seed, but it was the weekend and they were closed

all day. We had a dollar-fifty and bought a loaf of bread. That's all we had," Mary said.

Mary and Daryl are now staying with friends.

Ronnie, who lived in Room 27 of the Locke, is also homeless. She said, "I just walked the street all that weekend. No one even talked to me about a safe place to stay. The police kicked in all the doors after the people were out of the building. I asked Wayne (Goebel - the landlord) what to do about the key. He said to keep it as a souvenir."

Ronnie said she heard later that there were times arranged for people to pick up their belongings but she found out too late, so she lost everything including her T.V. and stereo.

Another tenant said he was handcuffed at the Locke and dropped off by the police on the corner of the street by The Brick. He has been staying at the Herb Jamieson Centre since.

Although the city says they have a relocation assistance strategy to put in place when tenants are forced to vacate condemned housing, the strategy doesn't appear to be effective in ensuring better replacement housing. Of the 33 tenants forced to vacate the Locke Apartment, almost half are still homeless. The landlord, Wayne Goebel, was able to provide other housing for 12 displaced tenants, and as of April 17, six others found housing with help from the Boyle Street Co-op housing registry. Some of the others are at the shelters -- the Herb Jamieson Centre, the George Spady Centre and the churches on the south side. Some are out on the street or temporarily sheltered with friends.

The city safety codes officer issued the 24-hour notice to vacate the Locke to all tenants, March 27. The reason stated was

that a March 19th inspection showed "as a result of the construction in the building, current openings in the building floor systems (basement, first, second, and third floor levels) to accommodate the new frontal stairwell has breached required floor to floor separation". As a result, the building was ordered vacated for fire safety reasons. The landlord was in the process of renovating at the time of closure.

Hal Wright, a city housing safety codes officer, was quoted in the January 28 Edmonton Journal as saying, "We have a relocation assistance strategy that we put in place when we find people in situations like this one (he was referring to the closure of another building). 'The day we issued these orders we made sure that everyone had a safe place to stay.'"

But, when asked about the tenants of the Locke, and why only about half had found housing, Wright said, "I don't know about that," then added, "As far as I know, we take care of everybody. Everybody has a safe place to stay."

His part in the relocation, after issuing orders to vacate, is to call Theresa Mobley, a city worker who deals with relocation. She then "fans out to all the proper channels."

"We look at if they're living in that unsafe of a place we need to get them out," said Mobley. She called the Red Cross, a social worker, Rita Gibbs from the housing registry of the Boyle Street Co-op and Brian Gibbon of the Community Action Project. The Red Cross pays for a hotel room for three days, and Gibbs works with the tenants to help them find replacement housing.

Gibbs said she made sure she was there to support the tenants when they were kicked out, and she called the Red Cross to ensure they were there at three

as well. For the tenants who left the building without identification, Gibbs, as a commissioner of oaths, was able to take declarations so they could get into hotel rooms. Fourteen people were put-up in hotel rooms that day.

Gibbs finds her job frustrating. She said, "We try to help them find housing, but there is not affordable housing available. There is housing for people with a stable lifestyle who can afford \$700 a month." And she said that about half of the people from the Locke were "hard to house" in that they had problems with addictions and/or mental health issues. They also face the obstacle of getting a reference. In short, "The need is higher than the resources" when it comes to available affordable housing.

Two of the former Locke tenants died within 48 hours of eviction. Rob McDermott had been a tenant for eleven months. He was on medication with serious health problems. Gibbs said, "Rob really took it hard." The other tenant died from an aneurysm.

Victor Botori from the Boyle Street Co-op, dropped by the Locke around 5 p.m. March 28. Regarding the closure of the apartment, he said, "The question has to be asked, 'Would anything that Wayne (the landlord) have done have satisfied the groups in the community? The Locke is shut down, but the sex and drug trade are still going strong in the community.'"

Botori said he saw Brian Gibbon from the Community Action Project speaking to the media outside the Locke, but tenants said Gibbon offered no relocation assistance. The Locke Apartment has been boarded up, but Goebel is continuing with the renovations.

- Linda Dumont

LIEBUTIT



Qualicum First Nation Cultural Insensitivity on Sacred Site

On March 11, 2003 a branch of the Department of Fisheries and Ocean (Small Crafts, Harbours) disturbed a burial midden at Deep Bay when they were expanding their parking lot and boat ramp facility at the Deep Bay wharf. Chief and Council were never notified by Small Crafts' Harbours but received confirmation on March 14, 2003 that DFO applied to alter the Deep Bay site. Chief and Council were in touch with DFO on Wednesday, March 19, 2003 and a team flew over on Thursday, March 20, 2003 to assess the site, the situation and the issues.

Our initial meeting with DFO and the Harbour Authority of Deep Bay was very uncomfortable. The DFO engineer made many insensitive and inappropriate remarks. Initially he did not want to stop the project, and wanted to discuss how we could use the gravesite for the boat launch turnaround anyway. Since this meeting, other DFO representatives have been assigned to talk to the elected Chief, and some of our issues about security, halting of work, adding extra archaeologists, and reinterment have been addressed.

To date, a team of six archaeologists and three different Band Members have worked the last six days and have removed what they believe to be the remains of five individuals. All five have been found to be nobility—one chief, possibly his wife, two adolescents, and one woman believed to be a medicine person. The grave goods have included obsidian, quartz crystal and dentalia. The age of the site is between 1600 and 2000 years. All the graves have been

To date, a team of six archaeologists and three different Band Members have worked the last six days and have removed what they believe to be the remains of five individuals. All five have been found to be nobility—one chief, possibly his wife, two adolescents, and one woman believed to be a medicine person.

disturbed; only two of the people are left intact.

The contractors removed midden soil from the site and deposited it behind the fire hall in Deep Bay. Unfortunately, the soil contained midden material and human

remains. We are uncertain about whether this material was actually removed before or after the human remains were discovered.

In 1975, an archaeologist named Monk did an extensive dig in Deep Bay and identified the site as being Northern Coast Salish from the Pentlatch linguistic grouping in origin. Two Band Members participated in this original dig. In that same time period another site was excavated at the mouth of the Little Qualicum River, two other Band Members participated in that dig showing another large Pentlatch settlement. Both the Deep Bay and the Little Qualicum Sites have shown early use of Southern Kwagiulth fishing technology in their weirs and traps.

The site that was recently disturbed by DFO was part of the originally surveyed archaeological site and, therefore, required that the DFO apply for a permit before proceeding to do any work in that area. Chief and Council have, therefore, called the RCMP to begin an investigation as to whether or not the Provincial Heritage Conservation Act has been breached by doing this project and others in the area.

All the archaeological material, grave goods, and human remains will be temporarily stored at the British Columbia Royal Provincial Museum where they will attempt to reconstruct the skeletons to ensure that no others have been disturbed and to carbon date and analyze the remains. We have already contacted appropriate cultural people to advise and direct us as to the proper handling of the remains

and a subsequent reinterment at a later date. The site at Deep Bay is not secure although a fence has been put up, although the site is on the Department of Highways easement and is subject to potential development. This does not appear to be a safe place to reinter the remains. We will, therefore, follow the advice of cultural specialists to proceed once the archaeology branch has finished with its investigation.

Several members of the press have called the office for a statement. We have declined all but The PQ News this morning. We gave a brief description of what was found, and that we will try to handle this in an appropriate manner. We will be issuing a press release on Wednesday, but wanted the Band members to be aware of the situation before the news becomes public. The PQ News reporter was at the site on March 20, 2003 but agreed to wait before running a story until a fence and security was in place and our Band Members could be informed.

We will keep you posted as new information comes forward, but this excavation and dig should be completed by tomorrow with plans for further investigative work to be done in the fall of this year to determine the size of the site. The excavation this week has only been about the recovery of the disturbed gravesites. You can appreciate that we are trying to keep knowledge of this site quite private until DFO puts a fence around the area, and that should be complete today. There is evidence of a lot of disturbance on the site, as the archaeologist come in each day. A fence should remain on site until the excavation in the fall is complete. The DFO will be permitted to complete a modified version of their parking lot with archaeological supervision.

- Kim Recalma-Clutesi
Chief of the Qualicum First Nation

SUBVERSES

PILL BLUES

I've got no bills, I owe nobody
Folks down at the stores all welcome me,
But I take pills and that ain't funny,
Because those little pills are killing me.

Oh I was bright when I was a teener,
but Oh so very foolish too,
I found morphine, and Lord I loved it,
It wasn't really very hard to do.

It took four years to stop me bootin'
And thirty years to learn to stay away,
From the morphine that calls
across the decades,
And that's part of why I'm eating pills today.

Ten years ago I started slipping sideways,
Now I'm medicated each and every day,
To keep me straight so I won't scare
the neighbors,
But those pills keep getting in the way.

I used to write and make a little music,
I acted, painted and busked in any key,
Now those little trunks don't let it happen,
This is how they're slowly killing me.

And here's my wife, she really loves me,
She knows my moods and
always helps me heal,
My broken brain and my odd behavior,
She keeps me on a fairly even keel.

So I take pills, they keep my thinking healthy,
But they dim my mind and
then they let me slide,
Into a place where my soul can't follow,
And so they kill me slowly here inside.

I've got no bills, I owe nobody
Folks down at the stores all welcome me,
But I take pills and that ain't funny,
The Goddamn little pills are killing me.

- Dale Sommerville

These are the lyrics to one of the songs found on the
Patchworks CD which is now available from your favorite
Our Voice vendor.

SISTER

You walked the streets with me,
You were beaten many times.
You fed many people on Sundays.
You were taken advantage of many times.
You were made fun of because
of the way you looked and dressed.
You were called many cruel names.
People didn't understand you,
But I knew different.
You walked the streets to protect me.
You were beaten when I wasn't around.
You were called stupid,
but I knew different.
You are very clever in your own ways.
The people that did get to know you
were your friends forever.
My life would be very
empty today without you.
You aren't only my street sister -
you are my sister.

- Betty Nordin

THANKFULNESS

When the sun shines
Remember me.
When the wind blows,
Remember my temper.
When the snow flies,
Remember my thoughtfulness
And my helpfulness.
When the rain pours,
Remember my tears.
When you see the clouds,
Remember my pain and loneliness.
When you look at your children with love,
Remember I carried you.
When you cry and hurt,
Remember life is not easy.
When you're confused,
Remember there is a reason.
When you're in trouble,
Remember Creator and Prayer.
When you're lost like me,
Remember my love around.
Remember to thank Mother Earth,
When you feel pain, depressed
and lost in heart,
Thank Creator for your feelings.

- Marjorie Whalen

THE LEGEND OF SPRING

Brown grass
Bare trees
Condoms lying around on
the ground
Points are lying around
The girls are back on the
street corners
Garbage all over
It's cold and windy
My oh my,
I do love spring!

- Betty Nordin

THE LINE

There was a line in my life
that I used to think of often.
On one side of the line, there were drugs,
booze, loneliness, sleeping here and there.
There was despair in my life.
On the other side, there is hope, stability, a
roof over my head and support of friends.
I cry out in anguish -
which side do I belong to?
I know that if I go back
to the other side, I may not make it back.
I also know that if I stay
on this side, life is good for me.
Today I know that there is
only one side of life for me.
I'm living on the right side of the line now.
The other side of the line
is slowly fading into the past and
this is the right side of the line for me.

- Betty Nordin

TURNING FOR HELP

Turned to a friend of mine for help.
She said, "You always ask for help.
I was always there to help but each time
you would fall off."
Turned to detox centre for help.
They said, "You've been here many times.
This time we can't help because every
time you fall off."
Went to a women's shelter for help.
They said, "You've been here many times.
Over and over."
I told them, "This time it's different."
I want help, I won't fall! Everybody
has given up on me!
They're telling me when I get help from
anyone, I fall and go back to my old ways.
I've done this so many times that now when
I need help, I can't find a place to go for help.
So I'll keep turning for help and
maybe I'll get the help I need.

- Betty Nordin

THE ALBERTA ADVANTAGE

I have no roof
so you shelter me
with rhetoric.
I have no coat
so you clothe me
in disdain.
I have no candle
so you warm me
with dogma.
I have no dinner
so you feed me
with lies.
I have no hope
so you comfort me
with contempt.

- Kim Bouwmeester

S SUBVERSES

Intended or serving to
subvert, especially
intended to overthrow or
undermine an established
government:

"Sex and creativity are
often seen by dictators
as subversive activities"

ERICA JONG

THE RHUBARB

The Fox's Den

City Market Dilemma

Patty Milligan, who is the chair of the Downtown City Market Vendor's Association, says the vendors are committed to staying in the city core. Right now, there is a lot of uncertainty concerning the sale of the building, which makes it harder for any long-term planning.

When, and if, push comes to shove, the vendors will relocate if they are not included in the new development plans.

The Farmer's market has been in business in the downtown area for over one hundred years and would like to be around for another century. There are many hurdles for the businesses and people that call downtown home, especially those who live east of 97th St. The area has been called an urban blight by Mayor Bill Smith, despite the fact that it is purportedly part of the Jasper East Village Revitalization Area.

There were great hopes for the market in 1998, when the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation (EDDC) took over management.

They have initiated the plans to spruce up the building and change the image, which has been in decline for years. The main problems were illegal drug activity, panhandlers and public-drunkness. Civic

politicians did not make reversing the decline a top priority.

With the EDDC on board, by 2002 the hustle and bustle of the market was growing, but the road to recovery was short-circuited by the short-sightedness of the powers-that-be when they announced that the building was for sale. SALE?!!

The sale is going ahead despite the support for the market. The uncertainty caused by the upheaval has led to decreasing numbers of vendors and customers. The closing of the street-level businesses only served to compound the problem.

The Farmer's Market is just one component of the larger picture. The only major business and redevelopment geared to income is on 97th St. and between Jasper Ave. and 104th Ave. Above the Hardware Grill, there are rental units. Grounds for Coffee has been closed for two years. At the end of June, the Army & Navy will be closed as well.

The restoration of the Fix & Smith Law Office on the corner of 97th St. and 102nd Ave. points in the right direction. We can see what the development would look like. In the face of all these closures, one building is just a drop in the bucket.

With all the major building activity designed to entice people to shop and live in the city core, it is a no-brainer that 97th St. and parts east is a vibrant part of the community that should not be laid to waste.

- Kevin Fox



RHUBARB **R**

RHUBARB: A discussion, often heated, in which a difference of opinion is expressed:

Altercation, argument, bicker, clash, contention, controversy, debate, difficulty, disagreement, dispute, fight, polemic, quarrel, run-in, spat, squabble, tiff.

ROGET'S THESAURUS

Compassion in Cyberspace

Iwent back into my Sunday chat on CBC to pick up a short interchange I participated in about the SARS question and found some changes:

Theresa McBryan - 02:50pm Apr 6, 2003 EST/EDT (#326 of 514)

The thing that worries me most about the SARS outbreak is that it is happening in the cities of Canada with the largest homeless populations. Ill health for street people is just a fact of life. In this population SARS could kill hundreds before anybody noticed and infect thousands as they panhandle on the street. As voters, we have allowed our public officials to create a potentially catastrophic situation; by slashing social services we have created a potential vector for many dangerous infectious diseases (a lot more people are dying unnoticed of Hep C right now than of SARS) and by slashing health care funding have impaired our ability to respond to a medical emergency of this type. I hope containment works. However, even if it works this time will it continue to work in the future if we do not start forcing our elected officials to recognize that short-term fixes of social policy may put us into a position of being unable to respond to future danger?

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CBC helpfully removed a rather offensive remark between these two postings to the effect that homeless people choose their own lifestyle and that this individual stays away from them because they are dirty. Who says we do not have censorship in Canada? The succeeding remarks indicate the tenor of the conversation. Can you see how fast denial started surfacing? I guess I can't use this thread without its centerpiece, I'll try to get some shit flying somewhere else and copy it before "Big Brother" cleans things up.

Theresa McBryan - 03:14pm Apr 6, 2003 EST/EDT (#329 of 514)

I suspect most homeless people would welcome quarantine; then at least they would have a roof over their head. The question for the rest of us is: Is this doable? If it is doable in an emergency, why wait for the emergency? Why create the emergency? You can keep washing your hands but be careful about doing it in public washrooms. Stay at home, quarantine yourself. I would rather invest in a healthy population and enjoy the freedom of the streets.

PersonPerson - 03:26pm Apr 6, 2003 EST/EDT (#330 of 514)

Brother:
You criticize "Theresa" for being concerned about all the homeless people. By limiting your concern (rather your lack of it) to the homeless people she talks about, I think you are missing her point.

Her point, I think, is that the poor health among the homeless is a source of possible spread for this disease. To go further with that thought... what about the IV drug users who might be breaking into YOUR house, and coughing on YOUR toothbrush? What if that IV drug user (who is breaking into your house because we have defined them as criminals rather than as patients - which is another way of thinking about their addiction) has SARS?

The image of you staying at home to avoid contagion and of simply walking away from those who are coughing... have a heart whoever you are. Feel a little.

When the homeless are coughing on

those who are waiting at the bus stop, (or on the back of the bus seat that one then grasps) and then those who are coughed on are in turn going to the supermarket and coughing on ... or whatever.

Theresa's point (I think) is that a system of good and comprehensive social supports may in the long run (in this case in the short run) be way cheaper for exploited tax payers like yourself.

Rob9001 - 03:28pm Apr 6, 2003 EST/EDT (#331 of 514)

Theresa:
As voters we have allowed our public officials to create a potentially catastrophic situation; by slashing social services we have created a potential vector for many dangerous infectious diseases (a lot more people are dying unnoticed of Hep C-right now than of SARS) and by slashing health care funding have impaired our ability to respond to a medical emergency of this type. I hope containment works. However, even if it works this time will it continue to work in the future if we do not start forcing our elected officials to recognize that short term fixes of social policy may put us into a position of being unable to respond to future danger?

Agreed 100%. The only way this is going to have a chance of happening -- at least in Ontario -- is if we vote Eves and his ilk out of office. PC's are concerned with nothing but implementing changes that have short term gains, but long term consequences. The benefit to them for having implemented successful (some may question how successful they really are) short-term changes is that they get a boost in [Continued Pg. 12]

R RHUBARB

KINGSLEY AMIS

<12> OUR VOICE

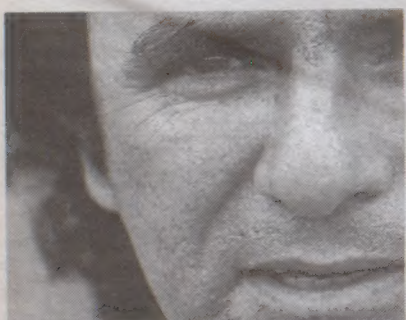


FANTASTICAL **F**

Nothing can be more delicate without being **fantastical**, nothing more firm and based in nature and sentiment, than the courtship and mutual carriage of the sexes.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

FIBRE, FACTS & FALLACIES



People's Columnist

An Immigrant's Success Story



Abreham Tsegaye has experienced what many immigrants face when trying to overcome the obstacles of a demanding job market. Abreham is a Northeast African immigrant born in Asmara Eritrea. In 1981, he fled his

war-torn homeland during a civil war that started in 1962.

The war forced a young Abreham to flee to Canada to establish a more promising future. He packed his belongings, leaving his father, mother and 12 siblings behind.

Abreham was determined in establishing a safer and productive life in a new land. He had everything going for him. He was the proud holder of a black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do, a former Tae-Kwon-Do instructor and a high-school graduate.

Once in Canada, Abreham enrolled in a Power-Engineering course at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). He drove a taxi during his 3 years at NAIT.

Abreham's certified training earned him immediate employment working as a power engineer at the University of Alberta Hospital incinerator room. He resigned from the position due to health problems contracted from breathing toxic fumes from the incinerator. The incinerator was shut-down three years later because it was finally recognized as a health hazard.

In possession of a third-class power engineering certificate, Abreham applied for a job at a local company for which he was fully qualified. He was not called for an interview. He suspects racial motives may have been at play.

Now determined as ever, Abreham applied to a bus transportation company that was advertising for 35 new drivers. He hoped to get on as a driver, then transfer to a power engineer position when one

became available. He was not interviewed for this position either. The personnel manager at this company told Abreham that he needed more experience working with the public, a Grade 11 education and a clean driving record.

As a former taxi driver with a flawless driving record fluent in English, Italian, Greek and Arabic, Abreham was confused and flabbergasted at the situation of not even being considered for this position. He lacked the proper legal resources to fight the company's decision to not give him a chance at the position. Instead, he worked as a driving instructor for the next 14 years.

In August 30, 2001, Abreham had acquired enough financial resources from his position as a driving instructor and established his own Driver Instruction school called: Global Driving School in Edmonton.

Abreham hit obstacles along the way, but his is truly a success story.

- John Zapantis

Afternoon Tea With Michael Phair

Recently, I was lucky enough to talk to Councilman Michael Phair. As a mentally-ill, homeless man, I had a few questions about the hard-core homeless men and women in Edmonton (there are currently 1900). Mr. Phair turned out to be very knowledgeable on the topic, a

very well-read man indeed.

What I wanted to know from him concerned the Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness (2000 - 2003). The name of the plan is somewhat misleading because the city kicks-in only 5% of the budget. Mr. Phair explained that the reason for this is that shelter for people falls under federal and provincial jurisdictions.

I asked him why only \$20,000 is spent (over a 3-year period) on Access to Housing and Eviction Programs. He said that most of the remainder is covered by private donations and that the monies I quoted were only meant to be a token amount. No kidding!

There were a lot of numbers we could have discussed that didn't seem to add-up to adequately addressing the needs of the homeless in downtown Edmonton, but I wanted to hear his own ideas on the subject. I asked Mr. Phair if the city's plan in fighting homelessness is working. He said yes, but added that the population of Edmonton has greatly increased over the past few years and that the vacancy rate was less than 2%. It can be especially difficult to find a place in Edmonton if you are subsisting on welfare. I asked Mr. Phair if he thought he could live on the \$380/month that Social Services pays, considering that the cheapest place you can find is \$250/month, not including a damage deposit. He said that there was no way he could do it and suggested that someone ask Ralph Klein how he expected people to survive on that amount. That sums up my brief interview with Mr. Phair, a wise man indeed.

- Bruce Gossell

VENDOR REPUBLIC

In Memory of Patches

A member of the Our Voice community. He will be sorely missed.

R REPUBLIC

"A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will. Some days I wonder if this wounded bird will ever fly and other days I just don't care."

Excerpt from Patches' journal, Our Voice, February 2003.

I despair of the Republic! Such dreariness, such whining sorrow women, such utter absence of the amenities, such crass food, crass manners, crass landscape!... What a horror it is for a whole nation to be developing without the sense of beauty & eating bananas for breakfast.

EDITH WHARTON

When I heard that Patches had passed away I desperately wanted to write something for him, a good remembrance. Yet when I sat down with my pen and paper I realized there were so many facts I didn't know. How old was he? How many brothers and sisters did he have? Had he ever been married? Did he have any children?

The only thing I had were memories of conversations, a deeply rooted sense of friendship and respect and the painful edge of my own regret.

I offer the following with this apology: The facts of his life are not included not because they aren't important, but because I do not know them. I can write only the things I knew and loved about him during the time I was privileged to know him. I hope it is enough.

A year ago Patches came to my office and told me about a dream he had had the night before. He was scared: In his dream he had died with a needle in his arm. He was convinced the dream meant exactly that his cocaine use was going to kill him. He talked about it for awhile then, because he still seemed so afraid, we left the Bissell Centre and I drove him around on a series of errands he needed to do. At lunchtime we stopped at McDonalds and as I was standing at the counter, ordering, I looked across the restaurant to where he was sitting by the window, a tall Aboriginal man with long, grey black hair and a face permanently disfigured by an untreated skin disease.

Outside the window the bleak landscape of North Edmonton, still covered in snow, stretched in what seemed like endless, empty ugliness. That image: Patches sitting alone at a table surrounded by acres of chrome and formica, outlined by the cold white of late Alberta winter, imprinted itself permanently on my mind.

It was an image of a life lived almost utterly alone, utterly separate. It was the image of a man who did not and could not fit comfortably in the world. In that moment, seeing him across the restaurant, I felt that I understood the basic questions of his life, the questions he asked with his poetry, the questions he asked with his anger, his shyness, his humour, the questions: Why am I here, and how am I supposed to survive this life I have been given?

And, at the same moment that I understood, I knew that I could no more answer those questions than he could.

That day he told me many things about his life, about the sexual abuse he had suffered as a child, about the substance-abuse that had started when he was nine, about the years on the street as a sex trade worker,

about his longing to be free of his addiction, the contradicting intensity of his love for cocaine, and the fear that he would not be able to quit. And he talked about love and the need for love.

He told me these things as we went from errand to errand; he said them randomly, as they came to his mind, an outpouring of his loneliness, an attempt to piece together the puzzle of his life, an antidote to the fear his dream had triggered.

I listened. I asked questions. We laughed quite a bit, because no matter what the topic, Patches never lost his wonderfully dry sense of humour. It could be that he understood that too much unmitigated misery is difficult to bear, and out of sympathy for his listener he lightened the load with laughter.

What did it cost him to do that for me? When we got back to Bissell he told me he was determined to quit. He didn't want to die. And he especially didn't want to die that way.

Shortly after that day he left Edmonton and I didn't see him again for almost a year. Then one day three months ago, I looked up from my computer and there he was, standing at the door of my office. I was so relieved and happy to see him.

I asked him where he had been, what he had been doing, how it was going and, although I didn't ask him directly, the question hung in the air between us: Did you quit? Did you manage to quit? He showed me the journal he had been keeping, writing out his thoughts, his dreams and his poetry. He wanted to publish it piece by piece in *Our Voice*. He left it with me and we went outside for a smoke. I could only gather from the hints he gave me that he was fighting a losing battle with his addiction.

He needed to find a place to live. He needed to earn some money. And he needed to stay clean. At the time Patches reappeared, I was preparing to leave *Our Voice*. For reasons too numerous to mention, I knew I could no longer work at Bissell Centre, but one of the reasons which resonated deeply in my last conversations with Patches was the overwhelming sense of powerlessness. It was loving people while at the same time knowing there was so little I could do to help. I couldn't find him a safe place to live. I couldn't give him the strength he needed to overcome his addiction. I couldn't take away his past or his pain. I could only listen, share a cigarette and hope. And that never seemed like enough.

The last time I saw Patches was on the street near Bissell after I no longer worked there. He told me he had found a room but that it wasn't the best place for him. There was drug use in the house and the constant temptation to use.

The inner city was where he felt accepted, but it was also where all his demons lived. He was caught between the need for a home and the dangers inherent in that home.

After we talked he went off downtown to sell his papers and I went home to make lunch for my kids. I never saw him again. When Ron called to tell me he had passed away, every memory came flooding back.

I know that in death Patches will appear to have failed. But I also know that that apparent failure is an illusion, because no matter how his life ended, he lived it with courage, he lived it with dignity and humour, and he struggled until the end with all the things that weighed so heavily against him. There is not an ounce of failure in that.

- Natasha Laurence

Chasing Rainbows

Forever chasing rainbows,
fruitlessly chasing rainbows
Searching for I know not what,
forever searching
Trying to fill a void somewhere
deep within my soul
Feeling lost and all alone,
chasing rainbows to make me whole.

The emptiness within grew
and devoured my sense of being.
Women, alcohol and drugs
couldn't fill the void, but I
kept trying.

The void kept gnawing and
devouring me from the inside,
I ran, I hid. No matter what I did,
it was always by my side.

Sick and tired of chasing rainbows
that never materialized.
Despair dropping from every pore,
thoughts of death kept me mesmerized.
Terror filled fear seething through
my heart, dominating my mind.

Chasing elusive rainbows, a dark,
consuming void is all I find.

With foreboding I survey my life,
repelled at what I saw, I tried to hide.
Somewhere within a feeling explodes,
loneliness seems to say, "here I abide."

This wretched life I lead,
always chasing rainbows in
my cloud-filled mind.
Heart and soul filled with loneliness,
despair and hopelessness, nothing
left inside.

Chasing rainbows, fruitlessly chasing
rainbows that exist in my mind.
Rainbows that disappear like the
morning mist, loneliness is all I find.

Desperately my mind cries for
something that I can't feel or see.

My existence wasted chasing rainbows
that disappear before me.

- Patches

Burnt out

Burnt out, merely existing, standing at the
bottom of nowhere.

Mind blown, empty of thought, forlornly
wondering, did I once belong somewhere.

Burnt out, due to my addiction to alcohol,
to coke and pills!
Lost to who I am. Trying to think. There's
nothing there, seems my
brain is on the lam.

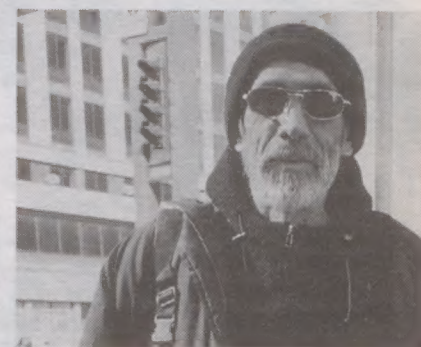
Burnt out, how could it be? I must have
been someone at one time. Words run
through my mind, that to me, make no
sense or rhyme.

Burnt out, not belonging, merely existing. A
non-entity!

Burnt out, alone, I seem to be no more, a
shell is all people see.
Burnt out...

- Patches

Vendor of the Month



Arron Bishop

Veteran *Our Voice* vendor Arron Bishop has had a taste of both success and hard times. He has also experienced the unfortunate circumstances of a near-death tragedy that changed his lifestyle from the financial security of working as a carpenter to working as an *Our Voice* vendor, following other paths along the way.

During his late teens, he dropped out of Grade 11 to pursue his education as a carpenter at a trade school in Calgary. He obtained his Journeyman's ticket 4 years after graduating from the course.

He successfully worked as a carpenter from age 17 until he was involved in a near-fatal mishap.

One day, at age 32, Arron was enjoying a day off from work riding his bicycle. A 13-year-old boy had stolen his parent's car and was driving under the influence of alcohol. The boy side-swiped Arron's bicycle while driving along the side of the curb, throwing Arron and his bike 40 feet from the vehicle. The force of the impact was so great, it knocked-out Arron, causing him to crash down with his bicycle, tumbling hard to the ground.

The impact of the accident inflicted serious injury to Arron's spine. He was rushed in an ambulance to an Edmonton hospital for emergency surgery.

It was there, during surgery, that he had 2 discs removed from his spine. The surgeon installed a small titanium pin into his spine to hold it together.

After 6 months of recovery in the hospital, Arron's ex-wife of 15 years, a nurse, took him under her wing and successfully applied physiotherapy exercises to his back. She was the angel that helped him to recover 18 months later.

Once he was healed and on the road to recovery, he decided to look into other career options. Arron was employed as a private guitar instructor for 2 years, then was employed as a security guard at an Edmonton shopping mall for another 2 years.

The turning point in his career climb for stable employment came when he joined a 4-piece professional music band for 13 years. His group performed a wide selection of music consisting of Rock & Roll, Country, Rhythm & Blues and Top 40; entertaining locally at hotel taverns, banquet functions and school dances.

After his 13-year stint as a professional musician, Arron had enough of the music industry. At the age of 49, he hung-up his guitar to pursue an entirely different lifestyle. Two years ago, he started vending *Our Voice* Magazine after watching numerous *Our Voice* vendors selling the magazine. Arron says: "I was feeling okay about it, more curious about it than anything. It helps my income. Also, I like the idea of having something to do instead of sitting around at home or panhandling."

- John Zapantis

EDMONTON

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